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Approved For Release 2003/14/19 : CIA-RDP54-00216A000100040012-2

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO :   
FROM : 

DATE: 26 September 1952

SUBJECT: Evaluation of Summer Area Programs

source: critical evaluations by participants in past summer's program and preliminary report by

Since there were two programs offered (one in two separate divisions) some of the comments apply only to one or the other; these will be identified accordingly. Most of the comments, however, apply generally.

(1) Value for analysts: general agreement that the idea is a good one, that some analysts need refresher-courses and others need additional area background, and that everyone benefits from new and challenging ideas about even the most familiar subjects. Obviously, no one program can satisfy the needs of every individual (some technical specialists, e.g., in the USSR area found that program to be useless or, at least, irrelevant to their major interests) but there is agreement that a basic background course is generally valuable. The problem is: the application of the idea was not always effective, in the various categories discussed below.

(2) Content and scope of the subject matter: of the USSR program, the most general comment was: too much historical material, not enough politics and economics; too much history and theory, not enough current information. Some students found a lack of coordination which led to duplication of effort, especially between  and . Some students found  material "over-simplified", "non-objective", and even inaccurate; others, however, commended his contribution. Of the Southeast Asia: too little time to cover a vast area, resulting in emphasis on only a few countries and a cursory survey of the rest. In general, a major problem was raised by the various levels of competence of the students: a median approach dissatisfied the experts ("too simple") and also the beginners ("too specialized") and evidently perplexed the staff as well. Thus the question: at what academic level of difficulty and detail should the program be pitched? One common suggestion is, divide the group according to previous training and developed skills; another possibility is, screen the applicants with an eye to uniformity of student level.

(3) Manner and method of presentation: some criticism of poor lecture technique, of failure to coordinate the series of lectures, and of failure to follow announced schedule; but a fair-to-good report was given on individual teachers, with an occasional excellent (for Mr.  especially). Comments on lecture/discussion balance were about evenly divided between those who prefer all lecture (probably those who have little previous area background)

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and those who prefer much more discussion time, possibly even special discussion periods (probably experts for whom lectures necessarily repeat well-known material). This is a special phase of the problem of student competence, and a solution will necessarily depend on the prior decision. Comments are unanimous that discussion should never be artificially forced.

(4) Time allotted: in general, satisfaction was expressed with the four week program, but the Southeast Asia group felt that two or even four more weeks would have permitted really complete area coverage. The USSR group felt that two more weeks could have been devoted exclusively to Soviet politics. Morning hours were generally preferred; some people thought fewer but longer sessions would least disrupt the routine of their home office. The press of office business made it impossible for some of the students to maintain anything like a consistent attendance record.

(5) Collateral reading and papers: almost unanimous agreement that no collateral work be required. However, some suggestions were (a) papers for further, intensive study, on a voluntary basis; (b) a suggested reading list, directly supplementary to the lectures and discussion; and (c) prior announcement of all lectures so that interested personnel can make special plans.

(6) Additional comments: (a) evidently, physical conditions in R. and S. Building were intolerable and this caused attendance to drop off considerably; in [ ] accommodations were fair but not especially comfortable; students felt that these handicaps were an unnecessary hardship. (b) Of the faculty, Messrs. [ ] and [ ] were especially praised (although some comments indicate [ ] operated on a level too high for part of the group); the others were given mixed reports, usually more good than bad. (c) In summary, the major points raised concerned the variety in competence of the students, the lack of coordinated planning and presentation, and the failure to emphasize sufficiently current political and economic developments in the areas studied -- which seems to be what most of the participants especially wanted. But the idea of the program, with the practical shortcomings noted above, was almost unanimously approved.

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